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No. III.

SEED FROM THE AMERICAN GRASS EMPLOYED FOR PLAT.

The sum of TWENTY GUINEAS, *being the premium offered, was this session given to Messrs.* COWLEY *and* STAINES, *of Winslow, Bucks, for raising Seed from the American Grass employed in Connecticut as the material of Fine Plat. The following communication has been received from the candidates on the subject.*

SIR, Winslow, Jan. 27, 1825.

WE again solicit permission to offer ourselves as candidates for the favour of the Society of Arts, &c. in consideration of our having, in the year 1824, produced 8¾ lbs. of ticklemoth grass seed, and otherwise conformed to the conditions attached to the offered premium, No. 23.

Our stock of grass was entirely derived from the seed you had the very great kindness to supply us with in the autumn of 1822. It was not weighed, but, as we should conjecture, the quantity might amount to 40 or 50 grains weight. The following account will explain the method of cultivation pursued.

Two large garden-pots were partly filled with horse-dung, and then nearly to the tops with rich mould; on this the seed was scattered as equally as possible, but with difficulty, on account of the seeds hanging together with much tenacity by their alæ.

By way of comparative experiment, the seed in one pot was covered about half an inch in depth with mould; on the other coal ashes were laid to a similar thickness.

In about three weeks the plants appeared in unexpected numbers, having a striking peculiarity of character, resembling small white spiculæ. They were kept in the open air, but in a sheltered situation, until the February following, when they had attained the height of one to two inches, and looked very green and healthy.

A piece of loamy soil, rich, deep, and dry, was then prepared with the spade, for the reception of the plants, which were set six inches apart, in rows, with twelve inches intervals. This was done on the 27th February, 1823, and the day or two following. The spot was afterwards kept tolerably free from weeds by hoeing and weeding, repeated several times in the summer.

In the May following, we had the pleasure of seeing our plants beginning to flower, so that we had reason to expect an immediate crop of seed. However, the grass by no means flowered generally; on the contrary, perhaps, not more than one plant in fifty bore seed, which was, to appearance, small in quantity, and was totally destroyed by the hares before it was ripe: they took it off (as they sometimes do wheat) about the middle of the panicle.

By the autumn the crop had assumed the form of a thick mat, and no further trouble was taken with it until the following spring, when it was again carefully weeded. It grew luxuriantly, and was ripe, we think, at the end of July, or beginning of August, by the criterion of the yellowness of the straw; it was therefore cut, made into small bundles, and dried in the sun.

After thrashing out the seed, much trouble was found in cleaning it, as the chaff, &c. could only be separated by the hand, since it could neither be winnowed nor sifted, on account of the tendency it had to form masses, as lately alluded to.

The pot containing the coal-ashes evidently bore the best plants; so that it is probably a suitable manure. With respect to the difficulty of equally distributing the seed, might not a large, and well mixed, addition of mould, or of coal ashes, very much facilitate?

The quantity of land set was four poles, so that the produce of an acre would amount to 330lbs., provided it bore seed in proportion. The value of the seed we cannot speak to, as at present it has, in fact, no market price. Two agricultural societies in Germany applied to us, in consequence, we believe, of information derived from you, for some seed. We sent 3lbs., for which we charged 8*s*. per pound; offering, at the same time, to supply them with a large quantity of roots. The seed was transmitted through the medium of a very respectable house in London.

The Society will probably agree with us, from the apparent coarseness of the straw, in thinking that our soil is too rich for the purpose of raising this grass for fine plat. The colour, also, appears very indifferent; however, neither the time of cutting the grass, nor the after-management, were by any means such as would have been dictated by an intention of forming plat; and we hope these considerations will be received as a sufficient apology for the circumstance.

With respect to the selection of soil, we will mention a circumstance which appears to us to merit some attention, as calculated to assist in the choice. In August, 1823, whilst the ground was very wet, a narrow-wheeled waggon, loaded with upwards of three tons of green poppies, passed over the plot of grass, and it was singular that in the next spring, the grass in the tracks of the wheels, and in the footsteps of the horses, assumed a widely different appearance to the other parts, being of a much darker green colour, and of more advanced growth. In fact, it bore the same relation to the parts which had received no pressure, as those parts of a meadow which have been accidentally manured by the cattle, do to the rest. It was evident enough that the condensation of the soil alone occasioned this luxuriance of growth, but whether it did so merely by checking the growth of those perennial runners which are produced in great numbers under-ground, or in a more direct way, was not so apparent.

A very small quantity of seed was reserved from the autumn sowing, of 1822, and committed to the ground with the plants in February, 1823, in two drills, twelve inches asunder. We learned nothing from this experiment, excepting that the species of grass is strictly biennial, as in the two rows not a plant flowered. The distance apart of the drills appeared very suitable, for the ground became fully covered before the harvest in 1824.

From these experiments we deduce, that whether the seeds of this grass be committed to the earth in the autumn, or in the spring, no crop of straw, or of seed, can be expected until the second summer following; a circumstance of much inconvenience, inasmuch as a crop must be lost, and a risk incurred of rendering the land foul. Should not this view of the subject suggest a cultivation of the ticklemoth, similar to that pursued with clover, ray grass, &c., that is, by sowing it with culmiferous crops. It appears to us even better adapted to such a purpose, as, from having a large system of perennial roots, it would be less likely to perish from being over-shadowed; for the same reason, it would also bear a ploughing every spring, in moist weather, without the least injury to the crop; but on the contrary, with the advantages of getting rid of the annuals, particularly of our annual indigenous grasses. In this manner we have treated peppermint and spearmint for several years with the best success; both with the plough and the breast plough, turning up the slices of the latter.

Another method of expediting the cultivation of this plant may be suggested; we allude to the planting of roots in the first instance, a practice well known in the garden, and calculated to facilitate the cultivation of the grass, by saving a year. We are, Sir,

&c. &c. &c.

A. Aikin, Esq. JOHN COWLEY, *Surgeon.*
Secretary, &c. &c. WM. B. STAINES, *Surgeon.*

CERTIFICATES.

SIR, 22, Bush-lane, City, 22d Jan. 1825.

SOME time ago we took the liberty to apply to you respecting "the ticklemoth grass seed," when you were kind enough to refer us to Messrs. Cowley and Staines, of Winslow, Bucks; we now beg to say, that those gentlemen did send us, in September last, ***three pounds*** weight of the above seed, which we have sent to our friends on the continent.

We are, Sir,
&c. &c. &c.

A Aikin, Esq. H. W. CAMPE & CO.
Secretary, &c. &c.

January 29th, 1825.

I HEREBY certify, that Messrs. Cowley and Staines grew, in the year 1824, eight pounds and three quarters of that species of poa, called ticklemoth, or New England grass-seed.

JAMES PREEDY,
Vicar of Winslow.

No. IV.

MATERIAL USED IN TUSCANY FOR PLAT.

The SILVER CERES MEDAL was this session presented to Mr. W. SALISBURY, Barossa-place, Brompton, for his information respecting the material employed in Tuscany for Fine Plat.

IT appears that specimens of the straw, with seeds of the plant, were, in 1819, brought to this country by Captain Roper, R.N., and were presented by him to H. R. H. the Duke of Sussex, President of the Society. Some of these seeds his Royal Highness gave to Mr. Salisbury, who sowed and obtained a crop from them in the following year. The plants being allowed to come to maturity, proved to be the *triticum turgidum,* a variety of bearded wheat, which seems to differ in no respect from the spring wheat grown in the vale of Evesham, and in other parts of England.

In the autumn of 1823, M. Fournier, of Geneva, a friend of Mr. Salisbury, being about to make a journey to Flo-